

“Wide And Wise” Community Policing:

Department-Wide, City-Wide, and Neighborhood-Wise

Mayor C. Kim Bracey

An Address To The Fraternal Order Of Police

Saturday, January 30, 2010

I. Introduction: Challenges And Promises

It is an honor to address you here tonight. First of all, as a citizen, a mother, a wife, and your mayor, I want to thank you for your service and your leadership and for putting your lives on the line for our citizens every day that you work.

During my inaugural address, I announced that a key initiative of the city would be to implement sustainable and collaborative Community Policing. I spoke about building on our civil enforcement team, the “Take 30” program, the nuisance abatement efforts, our downtown officers and Segway patrols, as piece of our existing community policing strategies. I stated I will emphasize police and neighbors truly engaging with each other to take ownership of our neighborhoods.

So because I know all of you are anxious to know what I want and expect, and how you can deliver it, my message this evening will elaborate upon The City of York’s Community Policing: Department-Wide, City-Wide, and Neighborhood-Wise.

However, before I expound upon a vision for Department-wide, City-Wide, and Neighborhood-Wise Community Policing, I believe it is important to talk

straight with you about the fiscal and social realities that continue to hamstring small Pennsylvania cities like York, because these realities are unavoidably related to public safety.

Not unlike other cities our size, such as Lancaster, Reading, and Harrisburg, to name a few, York has serious social and fiscal challenges. Our high school drop-out rate exceeds 50%. Our poverty rate is stuck at 20%. Our median income is slightly over \$26,000. Nearly 37% of the value of our taxable real estate is tax exempt, yet we confront enduring upward arcs in pension and health care costs that threaten our fiscal stability. All of these challenges make it difficult to build and sustain strong social networks and educational and physical environments where our children and families can be safe and can thrive.

Because of our inequitable financial constraints, regional shared services and revenue sharing are long-term solutions. You already are doing your part as a regional team player whether you know it or not. Consider the quality public safety services that you provide to owners and visitors to tax exempt properties located in the city. Consider also our experienced officers' excellent work done regionally with the county's Quick Response Team.

But I have no illusions. In one administration, the deck is stacked against us in terms of regionalization, no matter how sensible and equitable it is. Moreover, in one administration, we likely will not see the abandonment of a century-old, archaic local governmental structure and taxing system. We also likely will not cut in half or make a devastating dent in the percentage of impoverished city residents. Many of York's most menacing problems

have been festering for fifty years or more. They will not dissolve or disappear in the blink of one administration.

But we will help those who work with us. We also will continue to seek answers for the tough questions and fight the good fight so we can continue turning the corner toward hope and enlightenment. Likely our progress will not be shown in lightning bolts or silver bullets, but measured by small steps, people feeling good about the City of York, and yes, safer streets.

We will make York better. That is my sacred pledge.

We will do this one job created at a time, one house rehabilitated at a time, one block and one park blooming at a time, one neighborhood revitalized at a time, and city departments re-engineered and re-engaged for new challenges. We will sustain steady progress by nurturing neighborhoods, districts, blocks, and parks to be what they yearn to be – inter-connected, interactive, clean, green, and filled with people. And, we will do this by making Community Policing a clearly shared, Department-Wide, City-Wide, and Neighborhood-Wise philosophy and approach.

II. **Department-Wide**

You will recall, in 1994, during the Clinton administration, the federal Community Orienting Policing Services or COPS grants, delivered eight billion dollars to 11,000 law enforcement agencies throughout the nation. And that movement toward community policing has gained momentum in recent years as police and community leaders search for more effective

ways to promote public safety and to enhance the quality of life in their neighborhoods.

Chiefs, sheriffs, and other policing officials are currently assessing what changes in orientation, organization, and operations will allow them to benefit the communities they serve by improving the quality of the services they provide. Community policing encompasses a variety of philosophical and practical approaches and is still evolving rapidly. Community policing strategies vary depending on the needs and responses of the communities involved; however, certain basic principles and considerations are common to all community policing efforts.¹

Most departments say that they practice community policing, but can they all define what community policing is in clear objective terms? Not always.

Since before taking office, you all and the world of policing has occupied a lot of my time...in a good way. I have been reading books about policing and urban law enforcement, and just trying to get a better understanding of you and your world as police officers...from my role as a community resident and as your Mayor. I have spoken to quite a few people in the field as well; some who have retired, and active officers. My information tonight is based upon what I have gleaned. A copy of this speech will be made available, and you will see the referenced material.

1. Kelling, George L., and Mark H. Moore. *The Evolving Strategy of Policing*. Perspectives on Policing. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice and John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. 1988:p.8. Based on *The Newark Foot Patrol Experiment*. Washington, D.C.: Police Foundation. 1981.

There are compelling reasons why law enforcement leaders believe the time has come to alter the policies and practices of their organizations. These reasons are rooted in the history of policing and police research during the last quarter of a century, in the changing nature of communities, and in the shifting characteristics of crime and violence that affect these communities.

Policing strategies that worked in the past are not always effective today. The desired goal, an enhanced sense of safety, security, and well-being, has not been achieved. Practitioners agree that there is a pressing need for innovation to curb the crises in many communities. Both the level and nature of crime in this country and the changing character of American communities are causing police to seek more effective methods. Many urban communities are experiencing serious problems with illegal drugs, gang violence, murders, muggings, and burglaries. Suburban and rural communities have not escaped unscathed. They are also noting increases in crime and disorder.

In addition, the social fabric of our country has changed radically. The family unit is not as stable as it once was. Single working parents find it extremely difficult to spend enough time with their children, and churches and schools have been unable to fill this void. Immigrants, ethnic groups, and minorities, while adding to the diverse nature of American communities, often have different interests and goals.

Governments at all levels are having increased difficulty balancing budgets, which frequently forces police departments to allocate dwindling resources

to growing problems. However, even in this rapidly changing environment, where police cope with an epidemic drug problem, gang activity, and increased levels of violence, the concept of community policing is still taking hold. Police leaders using this commonsense approach to the problems of crime and disorder, an approach that may very well enhance and maximize performance and resources, have struck a responsive chord in both national and local governments and in communities across the Nation.

Government and community leaders are beginning to recognize we also must accept responsibility for keeping our neighborhoods safe. So glad members of our community could take time from their busy schedules to join you this evening too. Communities must take a unified stand against crime, violence, and disregard for the law, and must make a commitment to increasing crime-prevention and intervention activities. Police agencies must help build stronger, more self-sufficient communities—communities in which crime and disorder will not thrive.

Community policing is democracy in action. It requires the active participation of local government, civic and business leaders, public and private agencies, residents, churches, schools, and hospitals. In fact, whomever shares a concern for the welfare of the neighborhood should bear responsibility for safeguarding that interest.

Community policing is pro-active and anticipatory, with a focus on communication, neighborhood knowledge, and trust with neighbors. As Chief Wes Kahley has said, “We cannot arrest our way out of crime.”

Community policing is, in essence, a collaboration between the police and the community that identifies and solves community problems.

III. **City-Wide**

In addition, it has been suggested that community policing can play a primary role in changing the way all government services are provided at the community level.

In order to be effective, community policing must be practiced city-wide. By city-wide, I mean as a city government and geographically. So, we must practice community policing comprehensively as a city government, with all city departments engaged in the enterprise. For example, our not quite five-year-old Civil Enforcement Team, which meets weekly, relies on multi-departmental participation and cooperation to get beyond the silos of city government so key information is free flowing and effective.

The Civil Enforcement Team includes the Police, Fire Codes, Property Maintenance Inspectors, Parks and Recreation, the Solicitor's Office, the Redevelopment Authority, Weed & Seed, the County's Sheriff's Dept., the County Probation and the County's District Attorney's Office. Key accomplishments included:

- Combining resources to demolish a severely blighted and dangerous structures on South Queen Street; and
- Conducting periodic "Clean Sweeps" in each of the neighborhoods.

one of which, I believe is scheduled for this week.

So, you see, one way or another, the City of York always has had a community policing unit. And make no mistake about it. We have made real progress because of good strategies and excellent police work. But we would like elevate our approach to Community Policing, Version 2.0, if you will, so that community policing is a clearly shared, departmental-wide philosophy and approach.

How do we do this?

First, we will provide stability in the force. Under Commissioner Mark Whitman's tenure, we have witnessed an increase in the number of sworn officers from 92 in 2003 to 104 in 2010. Despite our fiscal challenges, we will strive to maintain this stable number of officers going forward.

Second, we will zero in on Part I. crimes. From 2003 until 2009, we have presided over a decrease in the number and the rate of Part I. crimes by 7.1 percent, from 2,949 to 2,307 crimes during those seven years.² As you know, Part I. crimes are the most serious crimes, including murder, rape, aggravated assault, robbery, burglary, larceny, arson, and motor vehicle theft.¹ An achievable goal would be, through your good work, to realize a year when there are less than 2,000 Part I. crimes in our city. That would be an important milestone.

Third, we will intensify our "Take 30" Program. As manpower gradually increased between 2003 and 2010, our police were given the flexibility to be more proactive. Today, on average, our police department conducts in

¹ The number of Part I. crimes per year are as follows: 2,949 in 2003, 2,933 in 2004, 2,744 in 2005, 2,590 in 2006, 2,585 in 2007, 2,652 in 2008, and 2,307 in 2009.

excess of 400 hours of additional foot patrols in neighborhoods per month. I think it would be a reasonable goal to log in an average of 500 hours or more of additional foot patrols per month. This is not a quantifiable goal for the sake of having a goal. Increased visibility, communication, and trust translate into safer streets. And, I've been told by some officers that they actually like to get out of their patrol cars and establish meaningful contacts in the neighborhoods. So, with your active participation, let's step it up a notch.

Fourth, we will continue our nuisance abatement efforts and county-city partnership. The nuisance abatement initiative, a critical part of community policing, led to the closing of multiple problem properties while others were brought into compliance. Achievements included:

- Shutting down a nuisance tattoo parlor on North George Street with ties to a national hate group;
- Bringing into compliance several bars that attracted quality of life crimes; and
- Closing a select number of rental properties that were problematic to neighborhoods.

Our nuisance abatement initiative has evolved in 2009 and into 2010 with a partnership between the City of York and the County. Through an unprecedented \$200,000 contract between the county and the city, four nuisance abatement officers are assigned to the four magisterial districts within the city. We look forward to partnering with the county to continue this effective program, and I want to publicly thank Commissioners Chronister, Reilly, and Hoke for their support of our community policing efforts. A very special thank you, to Sheriff Richard Keulebrer who supported these dollars come directly from his budget.

Fifth, pro-Active and anticipatory policing. Just as I will earnestly ask our citizens to help you, I need your help, too. Everything affects everything else. So when you see an obvious code violation, an attractive nuisance near a playground, a vacant building that is not sealed, call it in to City Hall or the appropriate department. We all are in this together. Again, according to Chief Wes Kahley, the goal of community policing is to reduce crime and disorder by carefully examining the characteristics of problems in neighborhoods and then applying appropriate problem-solving remedies.

Recognize that you also are key ambassadors of our city, and it is in your self-interest to help to build a safer, more vibrant city for your own safety and for the sake of your family. But it also is the right thing to do. So, I ask you to please encourage development by helping to market the city to friends or associates that may want to invest, build, rehabilitate, or put out a shingle. Become versed in the new projects that are taking root and that will help the city's bottom line. Buoy up the spirit of the local merchants and restaurateurs. When you can, patronize their shops. It means a great deal to them when our fine men and women in blue frequent their establishments.

III. Neighborhood-Wise

Finally, community policing is Neighborhood-Wise. We have experienced great successes in Olde Towne East, Salem Square, and the York College neighborhoods with revitalization and Community Policing. Our Community

Resource Centers and combined fire and police services at Eagle Fire Station near York College are models of a neighborhood-wise approach.

Residents Jerri Zimmerman from Olde Towne East and the YWCA's Community Renaissance Plan Area, and Joanne Borders from the Salem Square Neighborhood Association are largely instrumental for successes in these neighborhoods, and we need to either clone them or to identify and encourage new leaders like them in all of our neighborhoods.

True community policing is when neighbors take an active ownership role in their blocks and neighborhoods and work with police, based on mutual trust. So we ask our citizens to enroll in our Citizen Police Academies, become active members of our neighborhood associations, to volunteer for National Night Out, and to get to know the officers who work in your neighborhood on a face-to-face and name-to-name basis.

And, lest we forget, downtown is a neighborhood. Officer McBride's downtown patrols, often on Segway, have been greatly appreciated by downtown merchants and residents alike. A special thanks goes to Peoples Bank for donating four Segways to enhance Neighborhood-Wise patrols throughout our neighborhoods.

Community policing offers a way for the police and the community to work together to resolve the serious problems that exist in these neighborhoods. Only when community members believe the police are genuinely interested in community perspectives and problems will they begin to view the police as a part of that community. Experience and research reveal that "community institutions are the first line of defense against disorder and crime."³ Thus, it is essential that the police work closely with all facets of

the community to identify concerns and to find the most effective solutions. This is the essence of community policing.

IV. Closing: It Takes A Village

Community Partnership Policing is essential because “It takes a village”, as the old African proverb says, to raise a child right and to give her or him the requisite hope from which responsible citizenship and leadership can take root. Community partnership means adopting a policing perspective that exceeds the standard law enforcement emphasis. This broadened outlook recognizes the value of activities that contribute to the orderliness and well-being of a neighborhood.

These activities include: helping accident or crime victims, providing emergency medical services, helping resolve domestic and neighborhood conflicts, working with residents and local businesses to improve neighborhood conditions, controlling automobile and pedestrian traffic, providing emergency social services and referrals to those at risk, protecting the exercise of constitutional rights, and providing a model of citizenship. All activities you already do but taking this to the next notch will help develop trust between the police and the community.

3. Braiden, Chris. “Enriching Traditional Police Roles.” *Police Management: Issues and Perspectives*. Washington, D.C.: Police Executive Research Forum. 1992:p.108.

This trust will enable the police to gain greater access to valuable information from the community that could lead to the solution and prevention of crimes, will engender support for needed crime-control measures, and will provide an opportunity for officers to establish a working

relationship with the community. The entire police organization must be involved in enlisting the cooperation of community members in promoting safety and security. Building trust will not happen overnight; it will require ongoing effort. But trust must be achieved before police can assess the needs of the community and construct the close ties that will engender community support.

To build this trust for an effective community partnership police must treat people with respect and sensitivity. The use of unnecessary force and arrogance, aloofness, or rudeness at any level of the agency, which quite frankly you should know, will not be tolerated, will dampen the willingness of community members to ally themselves with the police.

Let me tell you a story. I am familiar with our curfew sweeps, as some of you know. When we have periodic curfew sweeps in the York, we bring youths into our police department for violating our curfew ordinance and then call their parent or guardian for returning them to their homes. One evening during a sweep, for three siblings, all of whom were under 13 years of age, the calls went unanswered, no one came to pick them up, and they stayed in our police department lobby overnight. That disturbing incident was the impetus behind the city establishing a curfew center where children can talk to a child care professional and stay in comfort.

Let me put beside that disturbing story one of two other children. On most days after school, two little African-American city girls would visit regularly two well known detectives most every day after school: Denny Smith and George Smith at the York City Police Department. This was when the

Detective bureau was in the Central School Apartment building. George, who recently passed away, attended the same church as the two children, and he knew the girls' families. The girls went to school with the son of Denny Smith, and the one girl had a crush on the son. After all he was handsome and a star football player. So they had all good reasons to visit. But the other reason the girls continued to visit was because the detectives welcomed them, engaged them, and made them feel appreciated and valued. The little girls felt like little princesses!

One of those little girls was me.

If children are to grow into responsible citizens, we have to give them stable homes, consistent role models, steady discipline balanced with steady encouragement, and space to breath and dream. It starts in the home and in the immediate block and neighborhood, and all of us, father and mother, aunt and uncle, grandma and grandpa, neighbors and block parents, principal and teacher, pastor, priest, and rabbi, doctor and nurse, coaches and volunteers, and, yes, our valued police officers are important parts of the civic equation.

Please join me, then, in making Community Partnership Policing the recognized way to do police work Department-Wide, City-Wide, and Neighborhood-Wise. Thank you for your continued service, and may God bless you, God bless your families, and God bless the City of York.